

Was Lindow Man a Druid?

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

by

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A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Frederick Suppe". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid, with the first and last names being more prominent than the middle name.

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Abstract

The discovery of Lindow Man, a bog body found in Lindow Moss, has created discussion and debate in the Celtic history world. Lindow Man's excellent preservation has allowed scholars to better study the conditions of his life and death. Scholars hypothesize that he was a Druid as evidenced by historical knowledge of Druid culture. The manner of his death, the contents of his stomach, and the prime physical condition of the body are suggestive of the Druid lifestyle and tradition. By examining the details of Lindow Man's remains, Druid culture, and current hypotheses, I explore the possibility that Lindow Man was a Druid sacrifice.

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Was Lindow Man a Druid?

On May 13, 1983, a peat cutter in Lindow Moss, near Manchester, England, found a skull, likely female. The police and local coroner estimated that the skull was of a woman in her thirties or forties. The little information they had on the skull fit the description of a woman who had vanished in the local area. Her home was just a few hundred yards from Lindow Moss. Seeing that the police found nothing else to confirm that it was the missing woman, questions arose about the actual identity and age of the skull.¹ Scientists at the Harwell Research Institute performed radiocarbon dating on the skull, revealing that it was almost fifteen hundred years old. Peat bogs are known to preserve bodies in extraordinary measures. The absence of oxygen and the presence of a high concentration of humic and flavic acids in the peat, which attacked any bacteria present, are what allowed the bog to be so preservative.² Therefore, it is not surprising that the skull was mistaken to be from a recent murder victim. At that point, the woman's skull became an archeological find and aptly named Lindow Woman. On August 1, 1984, a peat cutter found a preserved human leg in Lindow Moss, once again. This prompted a police investigation, searching for other possible human remains. The new search resulted in the finding of a body.³

There was obvious mystery surrounding the discovery of the human remains. Historians and scientists have conducted much research and many tests to attempt to answer the multitude of questions. The police initially took the body and the detached leg to a mortuary where they put them under the control of the coroner.⁴ After the Harwell Research Institute performed radiocarbon dating, placing them both at an age over a thousand years, the coroner handed the

¹ Don R. Brothwell, *The Bog Man and the Archaeology of People*, p. 11-12.

² Göran Burenhult, *Old World Civilizations*, p. 196.

³ Don Robins and Anne Ross, *The Life and Death of a Druid Prince*, p. 9, 11.

⁴ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 11.

remains over to the British Museum so it could examine and preserve them. After removing the surrounding peat, it was determined that the body was that of a man.



Lindow Man after excavation ⁵

In accordance with Lindow Woman, archaeologist christened him Lindow Man, nicknamed Pete Marsh by the media. Lindow Man became the oldest preserved body found in Britain during modern times.⁶

The dating of Lindow Man was a difficult task. Since he had no clothing and no possessions with or around him, archaeologists could not use artifacts to date him. His depth beneath the surface, six feet, indicated that he was, in fact, of ancient origin.⁷



A flap of Lindow Man's skin protruding from the peat ⁸

⁵ "Lindow Man." The British Museum.

⁶ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 12.

⁷ Burenhult, *Old World Civilizations*, p. 196.

With no artifacts to determine an age, scientists turned to radiocarbon dating. Radiocarbon dating relies on Carbon 14, which is constantly produced from cosmic radiation and taken up by life forms. Scientists further developed the method from Willard Libby's theoretical basis. He established that at death, the exchange of radiocarbon ceases, and the Carbon 14 would begin to decay at a continuous rate. When the Carbon 14 is measured, it can provide a precise dating technique, allowing \pm one hundred years for error.⁹ The initial radiocarbon dates varied markedly. The first tests pointed to a time of about two thousand years ago. The problem was the dates ranged from 300 BC to 500 AD, while the peat tests consistently resulted in about 300 BC. Scientists have not yet perfected radiocarbon dating, so discrepancies are common.¹⁰ When British Museum received the remains, they requested that the Oxford University laboratory conduct another round of radiocarbon dating. The results from Oxford University propose that he died in the first century AD, suggesting that he was most likely a Celt.¹¹

Scientists were able to perform radiocarbon dating due to the completeness and preserved nature of the body. Lindow Man is comprised of an upper male torso shorn through at the waist, likely due to the earlier peat cutting operations.¹² Although the bog preserved much of the skin, the preservative acids combined with tannin-like substances in the peat dyed the skin a dark brown and almost turned it into leather. He lay face down in a slumped position with his arms bent under his torso. The left hand was missing and the right was poorly preserved. His compressed and elongated head, due to the weight of the peat, seemed too large for his body and turned sharply into his right shoulder. He had a short beard, mustache, and brown hair.

⁸ "Flap of skin showing in cut section of trench." *Current Archaeology*.

⁹ Brothwell, *Bog Man*, p. 15.

¹⁰ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 16-17.

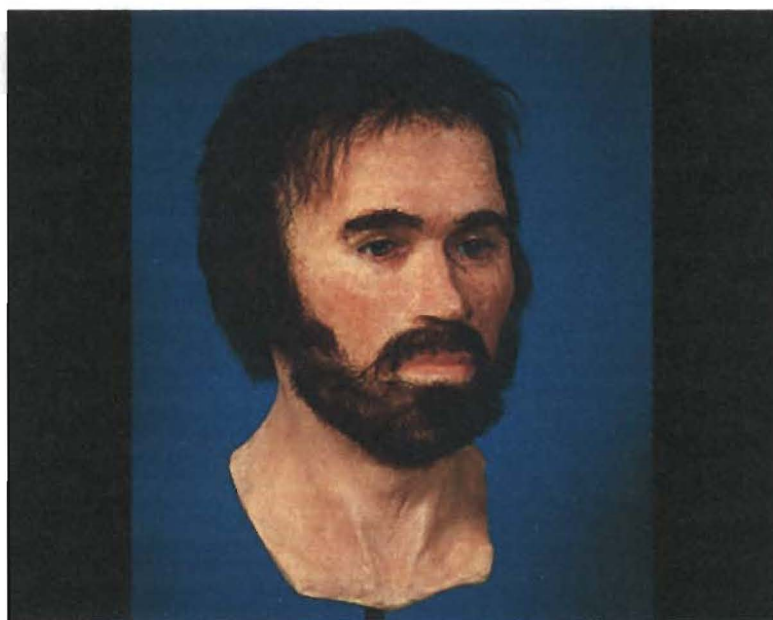
¹¹ Burenhult, *Old World Civilizations*, p. 196.

¹² Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 15.

Evidence showed that shears had cut his moustache and beard and his fingernails were neatly rounded.¹³ This indicated that he was probably someone of high rank in his society.¹⁴



Lindow Man's elongated head¹⁵



Reconstructed image of Lindow Man¹⁶

¹³ Burenhult, *Old World Civilizations*, p. 196.

¹⁴ Miranda J. Green, *The World of the Druids*, p. 81.

¹⁵ "Unknown." The British Museum.

¹⁶ "Reconstructed head of Lindow Man." The British Museum.

Archaeologists found him naked, at least from the waist up, with only a band wrapped around his upper left arm. It was later determined that the band was made of fox fur.¹⁷ After observing his physical traits, researchers turned to more elaborate methods to determine biological factors.

Through photogrammetry, xeroradiography, body scanners, and examination by a surgeon, it was determined that Lindow Man was in his mid-twenties, about 5 feet 6 inches tall, and weighed at least 130 pounds. During his life, he had been a healthy man, despite having worms and Schmorl's nodes. Schmorl's nodes are cavities in the end plates of vertebrae, which severe strain could have caused. There was no surviving DNA, but scientists were able to determine that his blood type was O. Scholars now had the basic information surrounding Lindow Man; their next task would be to preserve the remains to further study and inspect them.

After archaeologists removed Lindow Man from the bog, he was in danger of decaying, drying out, and falling to pieces. Scientists temporarily prevented decomposition by keeping the body cool and damp.¹⁸ To ensure that serious breakdown was not occurring, doctors and scientists made special checks on the body. The doctors took swabs to determine if there were any microorganisms on the body, in the surrounding peat, and in the dampening agent. The organisms that the researchers found did not seem to cause any substantial destruction.¹⁹ While the temporary preservation was good enough for a time, researchers needed to consider a long-term alternative. Freeze-drying the body achieved long-term preservation. Scientists first experimented on pigskin to find the best possible preservation manner. They treated the skins with different solutions and then freeze-dried them. Afterwards, they checked for any shrinkage and/or damage. The experts chose a polyethylene glycol solution because it did not seem to

¹⁷ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 58.

¹⁸ Burenhult, *Old World Civilizations*, p. 196.

¹⁹ Brothwell, *Bog Man*, p. 21-22.

cause any deposit to form and it did not change the color of the sample.²⁰ Scientists placed Lindow Man's body in the polyethylene glycol for ten weeks, and then froze it for three days and freeze-dried for three weeks; the outcome was successful. There was only minor shrinkage, no change in color, and no variation in skin texture.²¹ The Lindow Man currently resides in the British Museum.²²



Scientists examining Lindow Man²³

Before scientists and researchers freeze-dried the body, they made sure to search for any internal organs that might have endured. Lindow Man's liver, lungs, and heart no longer remained, but scientists recovered a section of his stomach. This section of stomach contained his digested last meal consisting of burnt bread and traces of mistletoe pollen, which will later become important in determining the manner in which Lindow Man died. He had not drowned in the bog, but had died before his body reached its final resting place. He had received blows to the head, had been garroted, and his throat had been cut. The position of the garrote would have sped up blood loss; the deliberateness suggesting this had been a ritual sacrifice, similar to that of the Celtic Druid sacrifices.²⁴

With the mention of Celtic Druids, it is important to consult the idea that Lindow Man could have possibly been one. The place name itself, *Lindow*, is of Celtic origin. In Old Welsh,

²⁰ Brothwell, *Bog Man*, p. 23.

²¹ Burenhult, *Old World Civilizations*, p. 196.

²² John T. Koch, ed., *Celtic Culture: A Historical Encyclopedia*, V. III, p. 1159.

²³ "Unknown." The British Museum.

²⁴ Burenhult, *Old World Civilizations*, p. 196.

it is *Linn Dub* or 'Black Pool'. The corresponding Irish phrase is *lionn dubh*, which also means 'melancholy'.²⁵ Before making claims of Lindow Man's origin, I will explore the Druids to learn more about them and later connect them to Lindow Man. It is difficult, if almost impossible, to answer with one hundred percent accuracy who the Druids were, what they did, and where they came from. Anne Ross and Don Robins state, "The Druids were the most mysterious, emotive, and intriguing aspect of the whole Celtic system".²⁶ To understand Druids, I will delve into the possible roots of the word itself and the powers and functions that the figures held.

Before studying the possible functions and powers of the Druids, it is important to look at the numerous possible meanings of the word *Druid*. The oldest evidence of the word is in the Latin *druides*. *Druid* is also in Old Irish, *druí*, and early Welsh, *dryw*. All of these versions derive from the Common Celtic, *druwids*, or 'oak-knower'.²⁷ At one time, scholars believed that the word derived from the Greek word *drus*, meaning 'an oak'. Another origin given is *derwydd*, meaning 'the body of an oak'. By putting two words together, *derw*, 'oak' and *ydd*, *Derwydd* was formed. Pezron, a seventeenth century historian, says the root comes from the Celtic word *deru*, 'oak', and *hud*, 'enchantment'. He explains this as the derivation because the Druids practiced their divination and enchantments in the woods, especially around oaks.²⁸ Others claim that the word derives from the Hebrew *derussim*, or *drussim*, which means 'contemplators'. The word *drush*, meaning 'an expounder' or 'an interpreter' is another possible Hebrew origination. D. Delta Evans, a man who has devoted time to the subject, maintains that Celtic scholars would say the word derives from *derwydd*: *dar*, meaning 'above' and *gywdd*,

²⁵ Koch, *Celtic Culture*, V. III, p. 1159.

²⁶ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 50.

²⁷ Koch, *Celtic Culture*, V. II, p. 615.

²⁸ Dudley Wright, *Druidism*, p 1.

meaning ‘understanding’, ‘learning’, or ‘knowledge’.²⁹ Although there are many possible origins, most historians can agree that the word *Druid* is a symbol of knowledge and power.

When exploring the topic of Druidic function, there are no written accounts by the pre-Christian Druids with descriptions of where they originated or of their beliefs and learning systems. Much of the information we have today comes from accounts of classical authors.³⁰ It is important to remember that the classical authors could have embellished and invented certain aspects of the history they are telling. In addition, Druidic doctrine was difficult for the Greeks and Romans to comprehend fully. Although these accounts are useful, it is possible that they are not completely accurate.³¹



A Victorian depiction of a Druid³²

One classical author, Julius Caesar, wrote down his experience with the Druids when he conquered Celtic areas. He stated that the people held Druids in high honor.³³ Dion Chrysostom, a Greek philosopher and historian, upholds that the Druids held great power over

²⁹ Wright, *Druidism*, p. 2.

³⁰ Koch, *Celtic Culture*, V. II, p. 611.

³¹ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 138, 140.

³² “Fanciful Victorian depiction of a Druid.” Roman-Britain.org.

³³ R.A. Stewart Macalister, *The Secret Languages of Ireland*, p.1.

the Celtic kings.³⁴ Becoming a Druid was lucrative because of the honor, power, and exemption from military service and taxes. Consequently, many youths went to the Druids for training that would last about twenty years. The Druids taught their students through word of mouth and had them commit the teachings to memory; they rarely wrote things down.³⁵ Druids reserved writing for private and public accounts and business. Caesar explained this tradition as a way to keep their verses secret and to cultivate the memory.³⁶ Many Druids were able to write and speak Greek, though.³⁷ Druids formed groups by combining experts of natural studies, poetry, astronomy, religion, and other disciplines. They were able to enhance the picture of the universe by studying it as a whole.³⁸ The Druidic values (attention to proper worship, avoidance of wickedness, and fair play) are similar to those of the medieval Christian chivalric code.³⁹ Caesar was the first to claim that their teachings originated in Britain and carried over to Gaul.⁴⁰ This leads some people to consider that Druidism might have been a pre-Celtic religion which later spread into the core of the ancient Celtic world.

Aristotle, the Greek philosopher, first described Druids as philosophers, meaning people outside of Celtic society knew of Druids by the fourth century BC.⁴¹ Diodorus Siculus, a classical Greek historian, stated that the Druids figured into a three-fold distinction of scholarly Celtic men:

They have lyric poets called bards, who, accompanied by instruments resembling lyres, sing both praise and satire. They have highly honoured philosophers and

³⁴ Koch, *Celtic Culture*, V. II, p. 611.

³⁵ Macalister, *Secret Languages*, p. 2.

³⁶ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 135.

³⁷ Helen Benigni, Barbara Carter, and Eadhmonn Ua Cuinn, *Myth of the Year*, p. 13.

³⁸ Benigni, Carter, Ua Cuinn, *The Myth of the Year*, p. xi.

³⁹ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 141.

⁴⁰ Macalister, *Secret Languages*, p. 2.

⁴¹ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 141.

theologians (those who speak about the gods) called druids. They also make use of seers, who are greatly respected.⁴²

Strabo, a Greek philosopher, made a similar claim to the one of Diodorus:

As a rule, among all of the Gallic peoples three set of men are honoured above all others: the bards, the vātes, and the druids. The bards are singers and poets, the vātes overseers of sacred rites and philosophers of nature, and the druids, besides being natural philosophers, practice moral philosophy as well.⁴³

Both excerpts highlight the honorable and important nature of the Druids. Their philosophy was analogous to that of Pythagoras in that it had an emphasis on mathematical patterns and a belief in reincarnation.⁴⁴ Caesar said in his account that the most important Druid belief was that after death, the soul passes from one body to another.⁴⁵ With their great power and knowledge, they would have had immense influence within the Celtic tribes.

Scholars claim that the Celtic people considered Druids to be scientists and that they worked with natural magic. Classical writers widely stated that Druids maintained the Celtic calendar and understood the workings of the cosmos. Pomponius Mela, a Roman geographer, wrote that the Druids knew the size of the earth and cosmos, the movements of the stars, and the will of the gods. Caesar concurred with Mela; the Druids had knowledge of astronomy and astrology. Druids also claimed to have created the universe and taught that the world was indestructible.⁴⁶ In their natural magic, they also held a great reverence for mistletoe. The Roman author, Pliny, described, in detail, the intricate rite of gathering it from the oak trees:

...they lead forward two white bulls with horns bound for the first time. A priest in white clothing climbs the tree and cuts the mistletoe with a golden sickle, and it is caught in a white cloak. They then sacrifice the bulls while praying that the god will grant the gift of prosperity to those whom he has given it. They believe

⁴² Koch, *Celtic Culture*, V. II, p. 612.

⁴³ Koch, *Celtic Culture*, V. II, p. 612.

⁴⁴ Koch, *Celtic Culture*, V. II, p. 612.

⁴⁵ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 135.

⁴⁶ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 138.

that the mistletoe, when taken in a drink, will restore fertility to barren animals, and is a remedy for all poisons.⁴⁷

The careful and complex manner taken to gather the mistletoe indicates the importance of the plant. Pliny went on to state, “They hold nothing more sacred than the mistletoe and the oak tree on which it grows.” The Druids believed that the mistletoe gave the oak trees life.⁴⁸ This belief led the Druids to the certainty that when added to water and with incantations, the mistletoe would bring forth life.⁴⁹

Similar to the mistletoe ritual, Druids were concerned with matters and rituals of religion and of public and private sacrifices.⁵⁰ They had to be present at sacrifices because without sanction and authority of the presiding priest, the ritual could not take place.⁵¹ They decided almost all judicial cases, public and private. One of the Druids would hold chief authority.⁵² This would most likely be the Arch-Druid. His peers would elect the person for this position. There would never be more than two Arch-Druids at one time.⁵³ Their settlement of disputes was final. If the person refused the ruling, the presiding Druid would declare a fitting punishment.⁵⁴ Scholars believe that the execution of criminals and sacrifices were supposed to please the gods.⁵⁵ Diodorus Siculus recorded that Druids were able to step between two battling armies and stop the conflict. The most brutal and angry warriors would yield to the wisdom of the Druids. Celts considered them the best of the men.⁵⁶ The Druids were priests and political

⁴⁷ Koch, *Celtic Culture*, V. II, p. 612.

⁴⁸ John Reynolds, *Secret Societies*, p. 102.

⁴⁹ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 138.

⁵⁰ Macalister, *Secret Languages*, p. 1.

⁵¹ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 132.

⁵² Macalister, *Secret Languages*, p. 1.

⁵³ Reynolds, *Secret Societies*, p. 104.

⁵⁴ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 132.

⁵⁵ Koch, *Celtic Culture*, V. II, p. 612.

⁵⁶ Koch, *Celtic Culture*, V. III, p. 613.

leaders who controlled the warriors, and therefore the tribes. They not only had power over their own tribe, but also held intertribal authority.⁵⁷

Some specific stories recorded by Lampridius and Vopiscus, Roman authors, seem to confirm that Druids had foresight with the history of the Roman Empire.⁵⁸ Druids could supposedly affect the outcome of battles by using spells and prayers. They supposedly had power over the elements and practiced hypnotism.⁵⁹ Their temples were in groves, but not many of them remain today.⁶⁰ The power of the Druids in Celtic society is unparalleled by any other person or group of peoples within the community.

While Druid power was unparalleled by any other Celtic group, they faced outside opposition. As the Romans were conquering Europe, they eventually made their way to Britain in 55 BC, when Julius Caesar first visited. He desired to make the country part of the Roman Empire, but soon left without realizing this goal. He returned in 54 BC, but again left the country with no possession. Caesar did not consider Britain to be worth the war. The Romans did not return to Britain until 43 AD. Under the rule of Emperor Claudius, the Roman legions conquered the southern half of Britain. Before the Roman invasion, the Celts populated Britain. It was a tribal society, characterized by chiefs, small villages, and Druids.⁶¹ The Romans did not understand or fully approve of this contrasting society. They found their “religion”, Druidism, to be especially strange. Druidism was one of the few religions Rome prohibited.⁶²

For centuries, Druidism had been the dominant influence on the spiritual beliefs of Europe.⁶³ The Romans claimed they banned Druidism because of the Druids’ bloodlust, but it

⁵⁷ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 130-131.

⁵⁸ Koch, *Celtic Culture*, V. II, p. 612.

⁵⁹ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 145.

⁶⁰ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 158.

⁶¹ “Romans: Invasion”, Web.

⁶² Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 50.

⁶³ Reynolds, *Secret Societies*, p. 106.

was probably because of the political power the Druids held.⁶⁴ During Claudius' rule (41-54 AD), he expelled Druids from the Roman Empire; therefore, Ireland could have been a place of asylum for the banned Druids.⁶⁵ Romans put an end to the Druids' human sacrifices in Gaul. The sources consistently portray the sacrifices as inhumane, as a means to justify the repression.⁶⁶ The Romans specifically observed the British Druids at Anglesey as an anti-Roman force, hence the reason the Romans dealt with them as enemies.

Anglesey is an island off the coast of Wales. The island housed one of the smaller Druid schools, and scholars now consider it to have been a Druidic stronghold.⁶⁷ The two previous factors would have been sufficient reasons for the Romans to invade. Tacitus describes the storming of Anglesey:

Women in black clothing like that of the Furies ran between the ranks. Wild-haired, they brandished torches. Around them, the druids, lifting their hands upwards towards the sky to make frightening curses, frightened [the Roman] soldiers with this extraordinary sight. And so [the Romans] stood motionless... Then their commander exhorted them and they urged one another not to quake before an army of women and fanatics. They carried the ensigns forward, struck down the resistance... After that, the garrison was imposed on the vanquished and destroyed their groves, places of savage superstition. For they considered it their duty to spread their altars with the gore of the captives and to communicate with their deities through human entrails.⁶⁸

The attack was devastating to the Druids of Britain. The Romans slaughtered them and the warriors. In addition to being a holy site, Anglesey was a pivot point of druidic wealth. Druids organized and controlled the trade flow of gold from Ireland to Britain. By attacking this island, the Romans broke the economic power of the Druids.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 50.

⁶⁵ Macalister, *Secret Languages*, p. 36.

⁶⁶ Koch, *Celtic Culture*, V. II, p. 613.

⁶⁷ Ronald Hutton, *Blood and Mistletoe*, p. 58, 130.

⁶⁸ Koch, *Celtic Culture*, V. II, p. 46.

⁶⁹ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 112.

Contractors found further evidence to support that Anglesey was a Druidic center during World War II. While building an airstrip, Llyn Cerrig Bach, a boggy area near a lake, was uncovered near the west coast of the island. The place name is Welsh and means ‘small lake of stones’. Llyn Cerrig Bach is a weapon deposit of the Iron Age. At this site, archaeologists found over a hundred valuable items that people had deposited during the first century AD.



Crescent shaped plaque found in Llyn Cerrig Bach ⁷⁰

The artifacts found included weapons, chariots, horse gear, cauldrons, blacksmith tongs, currency bars, and a trumpet.⁷¹ The Celtic people usually placed their offerings to the gods in water. These finds were particularly rich, suggesting they were offerings of desperation, perhaps to stop the Roman attack.⁷²

Considering Roman invasions in other parts of Europe, Ireland is optimal for studying the Druids because the Romans never conquered it, but it was still similar to Britain and Gaul.⁷³ The Druids in Ireland, and other countries, claimed superiority to kings, unless they were kings themselves. The kings never went anywhere without their Druids. They commonly referred to themselves as “creators of the universe.” Druidism continued to be an official religion in Ireland

⁷⁰ “Crescentic Shaped Plaque.” National Museum Wales.

⁷¹ Koch, *Celtic Culture*, V. III, p. 1180.

⁷² Philip Freeman, *The Philosopher and the Druids*, p. 170.

⁷³ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 132.

until Christianity put an end to it.⁷⁴ The more popular Christianity became, the more Druidism faded. Druids were likely to have moved into remote areas where they taught in secret to the few people who had sought them out. As time passed, the Druids became nothing more than fortunetellers to the common people.⁷⁵ In Ireland, people can find many Druid beliefs and values in poems. The expiration of the Druids may represent the wistful roots of Celtic Literature.

Consider William Butler Yeats' "Danny Boy":

Red Rose, proud Rose, sad Rose of all my days!
Come near me, while I sing the ancient ways:
Cuchulain battling with the bitter tide;
The Druid, grey, wood-nurtured, quiet-eyed,
Who cast round Fergus dreams, and ruin untold;
And thine own sadness, where of stars, grown old
In dancing silver-sandaled on the sea,
Sing in their high and lonely melody.⁷⁶

In this poem, Yeats made use of the disappearance of the Druids. Yeats illustrates sadness and loneliness for the forgotten and discarded people. The reference to Druids adds to the conjecture that Druidic influence has extended through time, even though the culture seemingly faded away.⁷⁷

With the Druid culture fading away, the discovery of Lindow Man offered a fresh insight into the subject. Lindow man was possibly a Druid as supported by recent archaeological discoveries that reflect knowledge of Druid culture. Anne Ross and Don Robins take an in-depth look at Lindow Man and Druid culture, in their book *The Life and Death of a Druid Prince*, to support their hypothesis that Lindow Man was a Druid. By examining the manner of his death, the contents of his stomach, and the prime physical condition of the body, the authors make a detailed connection between Lindow Man and the Druids.

⁷⁴ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 133.

⁷⁵ Reynolds, *Secret Societies*, p. 107-108.

⁷⁶ Reynolds, *Secret Societies*, p. 109.

⁷⁷ Reynolds, *Secret Societies*, p. 110.

It is not surprising that Lindow Man underwent a three-fold, or triple, death. The Celts did everything in threes, as three was their sacred number. He received three blows to his head with an axe, had been garroted to the point where it choked him and broke his neck (three knots were used in the garrote), and was left in the bog to symbolically drown. There was also a stab wound on his neck that was precise and meant to bleed him, rather than kill him. Even their gods and goddesses have three aspects to them, and three gods dominated the Celtic system. It would appear that his death seemed to be an offering to these gods. The three gods in question are Taranis, Esus, and Teutates, and they each received their offerings in specific ways.⁷⁸

Taranis, the thunder god, required the people to burn prisoners of war alive in giant wicker cages.⁷⁹ The word *Taranis* comes from the Celtic word *taran* and means ‘thunderer’. Taranis is described as the equivalent of the Roman Jupiter and as the “master of war”.⁸⁰ He is also associated with oak trees and therefore Druidism. People portraying him often depict him holding a thunderbolt or wheel, his other feature.⁸¹ While people have depicted him with the wheel and equated him to the Wheel-god, there is no direct evidence to prove this theory. There are only seven surviving altars to Taranis. Celtic worshippers set up these altars during Roman invasion. Despite the seven altars, there is some doubt that Taranis was actually of extreme importance.⁸²

Esus, the lord and master, was given victims who had been stabbed to death, hanged from sacred trees, or both. Scholars equate Esus with Mars and Mercury.⁸³ The word ‘Esus’ is not exactly a name, but more of a title, meaning ‘Lord’ or ‘Good Master’. Although Lucan, a

⁷⁸ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 45.

⁷⁹ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 46.

⁸⁰ Miranda J. Green, *Dictionary of Celtic Myth and Legend*, p. 205.

⁸¹ Rutherford, Ward, *The Druids*, p. 96.

⁸² Green, *Celtic Myth and Legend*, p. 206.

⁸³ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 46.

Roman poet, depicts Esus as an almighty important god, there is only evidence of Esus on two monuments: in Paris and Trier. Between the two images, there is an association between bulls, birds, and willows. There is a woodcutting scene, depicting the god as a woodcutter. Some historians suggest that Esus is pruning the tree for sacrificial purposes, as Esus' sacrificial victims were hung from trees.⁸⁴

Finally, Teutates, the overall god of the people, wanted his sacrifices through drowning in sacred pools or wells. The people threw other offerings, such as weapons and ornaments, into the holy waters, as we saw in the case of Llyn Cerrig Bach.⁸⁵ The Celts usually performed this ritual on Samhain, the celebration of the start of winter, on November 1. As a war god, he can be comparable to Mars and Mercury, just as Esus is.⁸⁶ If he was connected with warfare, he would have been charged with protecting the people. His name even refers to the tribe, suggesting he was the protector. As their protector, people might have felt the need to memorialize him. Historians and scholars have discovered many dedications to Teutates from Gaul and Britain.⁸⁷

Lucan described the threesome as "cruel, savage, and demanding of human sacrifice".⁸⁸ Noticing that someone had stabbed, hanged, and tossed Lindow Man in the water, these are obvious connections to the demands of the gods. The garroting and stabbing seemed to be offerings to Esus, who liked his victims strangled. Lindow Man's final resting place in the bog would have been a symbolic gesture since he was already dead. Nevertheless, the gesture was an offering to Teutates. Taranis' role is a little more obscure. The burnt bread in Lindow Man's stomach is symbolic of the fire offering. This paled in comparison to what the other gods

⁸⁴ Green, *Celtic Myth and Legend*, p. 93-94.

⁸⁵ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 46.

⁸⁶ James MacKillop, *A Dictionary of Celtic Mythology*, p. 404.

⁸⁷ Green, *Celtic Myth and Legend*, p. 209.

⁸⁸ Green, *Celtic Myth and Legend*, p. 93.

received, unless there was an aspect that had been glossed over.⁸⁹ Scholars and researchers had only considered the axe blows as an act of mercy up to that point. When given a second look, it is beneficial to note that there were three blows delivered to the skull. As previously stated, Celts did things in threes, so this could have been meaningful. When the executors had so carefully planned everything about the sacrifice, it seems odd that the three random strokes were acts of mercy. Three blows from an axe were “delivered with the sudden awful force of a thunderbolt, the mark of Taranis”. Offering him to each of these gods underlined the importance of this specific sacrifice.⁹⁰

A vital step in connecting Lindow Man to the Druids and their sacrifices is to examine the contents of his stomach. Burnt bread, charcoal fragments, burned heather, sphagnum moss, fine animal hairs, and mistletoe pollen made up the last meal of Lindow Man. The pollen particularly underlines the ritual significance and identity of the man or his killers. The mistletoe presence indicates that someone made/stored the final food or drink very close to the plant.⁹¹ Many believe the Druids took part in sacrifices and used mistletoe, suggesting that Lindow Man’s death was significant.⁹² The mistletoe would have ensured that sacrificial victim would continue to live, even in death. Not only was the last meal associated to the Druids through the mistletoe, but through the Beltaine festival.⁹³

Beltaine, or May Day, is one of the two most significant dates on the Celtic calendar.⁹⁴ It indicates the beginning of the summer.⁹⁵ Beltaine includes all elements of spring as a holiday for

⁸⁹ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 47.

⁹⁰ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 49.

⁹¹ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 39-40.

⁹² Burenhult, *Old World Civilizations*, p. 196.

⁹³ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 52.

⁹⁴ Koch, *Celtic Culture*, V. I, p. 201-202.

⁹⁵ Benigni, Carter, and Ua Cuinn, *Myth of the Year*, p. 63.

the people.⁹⁶ On May 1, people spread various plants and branches of flowering trees and shrubs in and around their homes. The flowers would usually be yellow in Ireland, and gathered before dark on May Day Eve.⁹⁷ Belenos, or Bel, is the sun god and the namesake for the holiday. Scholars have linked the name with pagan deities since Cormac Ua Cuileinnáin derived the word as fire of Bel:

Beltaine, that is Bel's-fire, that is the fire of Bel, that is two auspicious fires the Druids made with great spells and each year they brought the cattle between them against pestilence.⁹⁸

Fire is still an important aspect of the day. The smoke from the fires was supposed to be advantageous for the health of cattle, crops, and people.⁹⁹ Tribesmen would herd the cattle and bulls between the fires in a symbolic gesture representing purification.¹⁰⁰ The people in the tribes extinguished their fires so that the flames of the sacred bonfire could rekindle them.¹⁰¹ A Queen and King of Beltaine would represent the sacred marriage. The young couple would lead other couples in merriment and greet the “honeymoon” of the season. Spiral and circle dances around the Sacred Tree, erected as the center of tribal cohesiveness, represented resurrection.¹⁰²

⁹⁶ Benigni, Carter, and Ua Cuinn, *Myth of the Year*, p. 82.

⁹⁷ Ross, Anne, *Druids*, p.135.

⁹⁸ Koch, *Celtic Culture*, V. I, p. 202.

⁹⁹ Koch, *Celtic Culture*, V. I, p. 202

¹⁰⁰ Benigni, Carter, and Ua Cuinn, *Myth of the Year*, p. 82.

¹⁰¹ Ross, *Druids*, p. 135.

¹⁰² Benigni, Carter, and Ua Cuinn, *Myth of the Year*, p. 82.



A modern depiction of children participating in the spiral and circle dances of Beltaine ¹⁰³

The day was important for legal contracts. Workers would hire themselves out “from May Day to May Day”, and biannual and annual rents were due on this day. Authors and historians have documented these practices into the 20th century. Shepherds would move from their winter to summer residences. The Celtic people connected May Day beliefs with health, beauty, and protection. For instance, young women would drink dew at sunrise to clear away freckles. In addition, the Irish bled their cattle, presumably for health but possibly for magical protection. Fairies, witches, and the dead were likely to be roaming around during this period. The Celtic peoples designed many of their beliefs and customs to prevent harm from these supernatural sources.¹⁰⁴ The festivities recognized the sacrifice of the dying God. The tribe made a special cake with an intentionally burnt section. The person who randomly chose this burnt piece would become the sacrifice. Originally, there were actual human sacrifices, but eventually they turned to symbolic sacrifices, such as leaping over the flames of the fire. Anne Ross states that the chief

¹⁰³ “May-Pole Celebration with little girls in field of daisies.” Shutterstock.

¹⁰⁴ Koch, *Celtic Culture*, V. I, p. 202.

Druid would be present at the proceedings “wearing a bull’s hide and a white speckled bird’s headdress with fluttering wings”.¹⁰⁵

With the chief Druid watching over the events, Lindow Man would have embarked on the sacrificial journey. The burnt bread in his stomach links him to the sacrificial ritual performed during the Beltaine festival. He randomly chose the blackened piece of bread, deeming him the sacrifice. Anne Ross stated that he “seemed to be the sacrificial victim chosen at some calendar feast and this, in her experience, could only be Beltaine, celebrated throughout the pagan world on May 1”.¹⁰⁶ While the choosing of the bread was supposed to be random, sometimes it was prearranged.¹⁰⁷ The bread, or pancake, was probably made from the last bundle from the previous harvest.¹⁰⁸ Since the executioners took such care and specificity in the rites, scholars can infer that the executors gave the same attention to the preparation of the bread. We can assume that each ingredient was added for a specific reason. Scholars concluded that Lindow man could not have accidentally swallowed anything once his killers had thrown him into the bog. The executioner bound the garrote so tightly that nothing would have been able to work its way down his throat. The most questionable items found were the animal hairs. It is possible that rodent hair was mixed inadvertently with the grain. An alternative could have been that the bread had been baked on top of a ceremonial lambskin.¹⁰⁹ The Celts would have carefully planned and executed every aspect of the ceremony.

The ritual performed on Lindow Man was too elaborate to have been a normal sacrifice. It was special in that it was a triple death possibly done during a Beltaine feast, and a highborn priestly man was the victim. The grounds for the sacrifice would have had to have been a unique

¹⁰⁵ Benigni, Carter, and Ua Cuinn, *Myth of the Year*, p. 82.

¹⁰⁶ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 13.

¹⁰⁷ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 36.

¹⁰⁸ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 37.

¹⁰⁹ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 39-40.

event under unique circumstances, likely a catastrophe.¹¹⁰ Is it possible that the sacrifice of Lindow Man was a response to the attack on Anglesey? Agreeing that his death was one of ritual sacrifice, and the lack of other archaeological evidence, suggests a particular crisis spurred the sacrifice. If Lindow Man's death was in the first century AD, it could have lined up with the general period of the Roman attack.¹¹¹ The Celts would have chosen Lindow Moss because it would have been the only place hidden enough from Roman forces. There would have been very few other places to go, if the invasion and sacrifice occurred at the same time.¹¹² With Anglesey destroyed and the threat of more Romans invading, the Druids would have turned to extreme forces to try to prevent further damage. If the attack on Anglesey did not prompt the unusual sacrifice, what else could have spurred it? It is possible that a poor harvest, or sequence of poor harvests, would have required a superfluous sacrifice, but it is unlikely that the Celtic inhabitants were experiencing a poor harvest at the time.¹¹³

Another example of the importance of his sacrifice was the prime physical condition and pristine condition of his fingernails and beard, suggesting that Lindow Man was an aristocrat. If that were true, the small meal size would have been uncharacteristic, unless it was due to a ritual.¹¹⁴ Was he possibly an aristocratic Celtic warrior? As a powerful and active man, he could have resisted his sacrifice with great force. However, there were no signs of struggle or binding on his body, indicating that he willingly accepted his death.¹¹⁵ A fierce and powerful warrior would have been unlikely to give his life eagerly for the ritual. This led to conjecture that he was perhaps a warrior prisoner from another tribe, stunned into submission. Historians can rule out

¹¹⁰ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 79.

¹¹¹ Green, *World of the Druids*, p. 53.

¹¹² Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 92.

¹¹³ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 39.

¹¹⁴ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 41.

¹¹⁵ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 34

that he was not a noble prisoner because it was common for Celts to cut off their heads.¹¹⁶ Still considering whether he was a warrior, prisoner or not, there is an important factor to consider. Despite the sacrificial wounds, Lindow Man's body is otherwise unblemished. If he were a warrior at that point in his life, he would have been a veteran who had seen many battles. However, his skin showed no signs of battle; there were no blemishes, scars, or wounds. There was no evidence of asymmetrical muscle development due to wielding a weapon with the dominant hand. All signs pointed to Lindow Man not being a warrior.¹¹⁷ After ruling out a warrior, there were two options remaining to the researchers: bard or priest. Bards were not likely to be chosen as a sacrifice due to their great power within the tribe. There were also no calluses on his hands or chipped nails to suggest harp playing. Ruling out a bard left us with only one explanation; Lindow Man was a Celtic priest: a Druid.¹¹⁸ It is probable that he had come to Britain from Ireland. If he had been in Britain at the time, he would have likely showed battle scars from the Roman invasions.¹¹⁹ Anne Ross and Don Robins wrote, "If Lindow Man really was a Druid, he was the first physical trace of the mysterious cult that had ever been discovered".¹²⁰ The unearthing allowed the possibility of many new insights into the Druids' culture.

One major doubt Anne Ross addresses in confirming that Lindow Man was a Druid is his age. According to classical writers, Druidic training lasted about twenty years. Scientific evidence suggests that Lindow Man was in his late twenties when he died. He would have just graduated from his training, assuming he went into training at about age seven or eight. Why would a new Druid undergo this special sacrifice? There is conjecture that his teachers might

¹¹⁶ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 43.

¹¹⁷ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 44-45.

¹¹⁸ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 50.

¹¹⁹ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 96.

¹²⁰ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 52.

have specially fitted him for this sacrifice upon his graduation. He might have also been a king or prince, deeming him extremely special for the sacrifice.¹²¹ Some historians consider it possible that the Romans might have staged the sacrifice as a mockery of the sacred beliefs and rituals. There are two objections to this argument. The blackened piece of bread and other evidence points directly to the Beltaine feast. It is doubtful that the Romans would have gone to such great lengths to produce the imitation. The other objection is that there would have been no reason to perform the sacrifice in secret. The Romans would have made this a very public death.¹²²

While the conjectures in *Life of a Druid Prince* are plausible, other scholars have offered their own insight on the matter. In Malcome Browne's review of the book he states, "*The Life and Death of a Druid Prince* milks what are probably the last drops of factual evidence from Lindow Man while staying just short of pure, unsubstantiated speculation."¹²³ Browne continues to say that scientists might accept the inferences, but some readers could feel "uncomfortable" with the extreme claims; for instance, the suggestion that the presence of the fox fur armband branded Lindow Man as Lovernios. Browne acknowledges that the authors are experts in their respective fields, and they were able to create an enthralling and plausible account of Lindow Man.¹²⁴ Another scholar, Bettyann Kevles, offers a similar review of the book. She describes the authors as "setting aside the precarious logic that leads them from one hazardous step to the next." Kevles points out that the authors do not offer any alternatives to situations in the book: the fox fur, his unblemished skin, and no evidence of a struggle. However, her final comment offers credibility to the authors; "Whether or not the body in the bog is Lovernios, *The Life and*

¹²¹ Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 52-53.

¹²² Robins and Ross, *Druid Prince*, p. 94-95.

¹²³ Malcome W. Browne, "Back from the Bog", Web.

¹²⁴ Browne, "Back from the Bog", Web.

Death of a Druid Prince is an excellent account of how archaeologists use chemistry and solid-state physics in combination with folklore and recorded history to reconstruct a murky past.”¹²⁵ Although there are differing views on whether Lindow Man was a Druid, most scholars can agree that his discovery was important in some manner.

The discovery of Lindow Man in 1984 opened the door into Druid culture that historians had thought the lack of physical evidence had shut. With no previous physical evidence of the Druid culture and no written accounts by Druids, it has been almost impossible to make accurate conjectures about them. Lindow Man allowed a glimpse into the possibilities of what it meant to be a Druid, what the Celtic and Druid people might have been experiencing at the time, and how the Druids lived. Through careful examination and research, I have come to my own conclusion that Lindow Man was a Druid. I found *The Life and Death of a Druid Prince* to be useful in my determination. I find a lot of Ross and Robins’ ideas to be plausible, but I also agree with Browne and Kevles, in that the authors stretched some of their theories too far. The factual evidence that scholars do have pertaining to the Celtic and Druid people is enough for me to agree. Lindow Man was a Druid based on the sacrificial manner of his death, the contents of his last meal, and the prime physical condition of the body.

¹²⁵ Bettyann Kevles, “Celtic Twilight, Druid Dawn”, Web.

Annotated Bibliography

Benigni, Helen, Barbara Carter, Eadhmonn Ua Cuinn. *The Myth of the Year: Returning to the Origin of the Druid Calendar*. Lanham, MD: U of America, 2003. Print.

I found this book very interesting. I used it to learn more about Beltaine. Since the book was dedicated to the calendar, it was a very useful source. Overall, I thought it was a good book, well written and informative.

Brothwell, Don R. *The Bog Man and the Archaeology of People*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1987. Print.

I liked this book because it offered me another viewpoint on Lindow Man. The book was based more on facts. There is less conjecture and opinion in it. There is also information on other bog bodies.

Browne, Malcome W. "Back from the Bog." Rev. of *The Life and Death of a Druid Prince*. New York Times [New York] 17 June 1990: 176. New York Times. Web. 19 Nov. 2014.

This review from the New York Times offered an accurate and honest explanation of the book. The reviewer did not seem biased in his examination.

Burenhult, Göran. *Old World Civilizations: The Rise of Cities and States*. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1994. Print.

I did not read this whole book. There was only one page that interested me. It gave me the basic facts and information I needed on Lindow Man.

"Crescentic Shaped Plaque." Photograph. National Museum Wales. The National Museum of Wales, n.d. Web. 19 Nov. 2014. <<http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/2365/>>

"Fanciful Victorian depiction of a Druid." Photograph. Roman-Britain. Roman-Britain.org, n.d. Web. 19 Nov. 2014. <<http://www.roman-britain.org/celtic/druid.jpg>>

"Flap of skin showing in cut section of trench." Photograph. Current Archaeology. Current Publishing, n.d. Web. 19 Nov. 2014.

<<http://www.archaeology.co.uk/articles/features/who-killed-lindow-man.htm>>

Freeman, Philip. *The Philosopher and the Druids: A Journey among the Ancient Celts*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006. Print.

This book was not particularly useful to me. I believe I only used it once or twice. This could be because I already had the information from books I looked at before this one.

Green, Miranda J. *Dictionary of Celtic Myth and Legend*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1992. Print.

I used this to define the Celtic gods.

Green, Miranda J. *The World of the Druids*. New York, NY: Thames and Hudson, 1997. Print.

The World of the Druids offered a wide range of information on the Druids. I did not use it much, but it is a nice book.

Hutton, Ronald. *Blood and Mistletoe: The History of the Druids in Britain*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2009. Print.

I enjoyed this book because it gave me the information I needed on Druids in Britain. It is a hefty book and somewhat difficult to get through. There is so much beneficial and useful information though.

Kevles, Bettyann. "Celtic Twilight, Druid Dawn." Rev. of *The Life and Death of a Druid Prince*. Los Angeles Times [Los Angeles] 24 June 1990: 173. Los Angeles Times. Web. 19 Nov. 2014.

The review of Anne Ross and Don Robins' book is another accurate description of the book. It offers the viewpoint of the common reader.

Koch, John T., ed. *Celtic Culture: A Historical Encyclopedia*. 5 vols. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2006. Print.

This encyclopedia was extremely useful. It did not offer any in-depth examinations of my topics. However, it did give me a wide range of the basic information I needed. It also offered additional sources for me to look into. I did not like how the entries were written. They were somewhat difficult to read.

“Lindow Man.” Photograph. The British Museum. The British Museum, n.d. Web. 19 Nov.

2014.

<http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_image.aspx?image=ps219078.jpg&retpage=21162>

Macalister, R.A. Stewart. *The Secret Languages of Ireland: With Special Reference to the Origin and Nature of the Shelta Language Partly Based upon Collections and Manuscripts of the Late John Sampson*. New York: AMS, 1985. Print.

This book was not particularly useful to me in terms of the Druids. I found some very basic information. The book does make good use of primary sources to examine Ireland.

MacKillop, James. *A Dictionary of Celtic Mythology*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000. Print.

The work is an extensive dictionary of Celtic terms. I used it to help define the three main Celtic gods.

“May Pole Daisies.” Photograph. Shutterstock. Shutterstock, Inc., 1907. Web. 19 Nov. 2014.

<<http://www.shutterstock.com/pic-1264196/stock-photo-may-pole-celebration-with-little-girls-in-field-of-daisies-vintage-photo-circa.html>>

“Reconstructed head of Lindow Man.” Photograph. The British Museum. The British Museum, n.d. Web. 19 Nov. 2014.

<http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/young_explorers/discover/a_closer_look-1/lindow_man.aspx>

Reynolds, John. *Secret Societies: Inside the World's Most Notorious Organizations*. New York: Arcade Pub., 2006. Print.

I really liked this book. While it was not dedicated to the topic of Druids, it is extremely enjoyable. It offered me information on how Druids functioned in Celtic society.

Ross, Anne. *Druids*. Stroud, Gloucestershire: Tempus Pub., 1999. Print.

I found this book useful in describing the details of Beltaine.

Robins, Don, and Anne Ross. *The Life and Death of a Druid Prince: The Story of Lindow Man, an Archaeological Sensation*. New York: Summit, 1989. Print.

This book was an excellent resource to me. It had a lot of information on Lindow Man, his discovery, and how he could possibly be linked to the Druids. It has a wealth of information. I really enjoyed this book. The only problem I have with the book is that Ross and Robins seemed like they were stretching for theories. I am no expert, but some situations seemed like they were making too many wild conjectures.

"Romans: Invasion." BBC News. BBC, n.d. Web. 19 Nov. 2014.

<<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/primaryhistory/romans/invasion/>>.

This website was simple and direct. I was looking for a very basic explanation of the Roman invasion of Britain and this provided that.

Rutherford, Ward. *The Druids and Their Heritage*. London: Gordon & Cremonesi, 1978. Print.

The Druids and Their Heritage was useful to me in that it provided me with much needed information on the Celtic gods.

"Unknown." Photograph. The British Museum. The British Museum, n.d. Web. 19 Nov. 2014.

<http://www.britishmuseum.org/images/conws224_1.jpg>

"Unknown." Photograph. The British Museum. The British Museum, n.d. Web. 19 Nov. 2014.

<http://www.britishmuseum.org/images/conws396_m.jpg>

Wright, Dudley. *Druidism, the Ancient Faith of Britain*. Wakefield, Eng.: EP Pub., 1974. Print.

I did not like this book. I barely made it through the first page. The writing was jumbled and almost impossible to get through. I like it because it gives a detailed explanation of the root of the word Druid.